Mideast peace talks

US mediation bid appears

to make headway

Army deployed to crack down on Assam rebels

GUWAHATI, India, Aug 11: Around 1,000 Indian Army troops were deployed in the capital of the northeastern state of Assam today in a crackdown on separatist rebels, an army

spokesman said, reports AFP.
The deployment, ordered by the Indian government in New Delhi late on Sunday, followed the killing of two army officers last week.

Military road checkpoints were set up today and house-tohouse searches were carried out in many areas of Guwahati, witnesses said.

soldiers in Assam, where several militant separatist groups are fighting for their own home-Before Sunday's decision.

The army has around 50,000

soldiers had been deployed throughout the state but not in the capital, which was patrolled by police and paramilitary per-A brigadier and a colonel

gunmen opened fire with revolvers while driving past on a motorbike.

were killed on Friday when two

The attack was blamed on

the outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam, which has been

state for the past decade. AP adds: A bomb went off under an express train carrying nearly 700 people across north-eastern India Monday, throwing seven coaches off the rails. Only a few passengers received minor injuries, railroad officials and police said.

fighting for an independent

The explosion that derailed the New Delhi-bound Rajdhani Express occurred near Sarupeta, 120 kilometres (90 miles) west of Guwahati.

Many Indians for Queen's apology for Jallianwala Bagh massacre

AMRITSAR, India, Aug 11: When Queen Elizabeth II visits India during its celebrations marking 50 years of indepen-dence, she will walk into a mounting controversy over a 1919 massacre of civilians by

British troops, reports AFP.

The killing of 379 men, women and children at Jallianwala Bagh, and the wounding of 1,200 others, helped galvanise India's freedom struggle. The incident appalled Mahatma Gandhi, who was to finally shame Britain into leav-

ing on August 15, 1947. This week, India will begin 12 months of celebrations after half-a-century of independence. Jallianwala Bagh, however, has never been forgotten.

Today, many Indians are asking for an official apology. "If the Queen apologises, the

JERUSALEM, Aug 11: A US

effort to rescue the battered peace process appeared to make

headway early Monday with re-

ports of an agreement by Israeli

and Palestinian officials to re-

sume regular talks on security

named Palestinian officials.

Palestinian and US officials

would be aimed at leading to a

after a long day of shuttle

diplomacy by US President Bill

Clinton's Middle East envoy

Clinton were to restore the "se-

curity underpinning" of the

peace process and resume secu-

rity cooperation between Israeli

Ross said his orders from

The agreement was reported

renewal of peace talks as well.

said the talks between Israeli.

Israel radio, quoting an un-

issues, reports AP.

Dennis Ross

Indian people will feel proud because it was a massacre of completely unarmed people," says Shiv Kumar Mukherjee. who manages a memorial here.

"Many British who come here don't enter the ground because they feel ashamed, even today people feel very strongly about the massacre."

The Queen's trip is scheduled for October, Jallianwala Bagh is being considered as a part of her itinerary.

Britain's High Commissioner in New Delhi, Sir David Gore-Booth, was in Amritsar last month and visited the imposing red-stone memorial marking the site of the mas-

The memorial, he wrote in the bulky visitors book, was "a beautiful monument that reminds us all of the sadness of

Ross met twice Sunday with

both Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu and Palestinian

leader Yasser Arafat and suc-

ceeded in bringing their secu-

rity officials together around

midnight in the autonomous

provement," said Maj Gen Ziad

el-Atrash, the Palestinian offi-

cial in charge of security coor-

dination with Israel, before the

security meeting. "There will be

intensive meetings in the next

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

will begin a four-day visit to

Japan on August 24 to discuss

the frozen Middle East peace

process with his Japanese coun-

terpart, Ryutaro Hashimoto, a

Reuter adds Israeli Prime

"There are signs of im-

West Bank city of Ramallah.

Many want the British monarch to go further.

The killing occurred on April 13, 1919 when thousands of Indians had gathered at a walled - in area of open ground known as Jallianwala Bagh, a stone's throw from the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs.

Many were curious pilgrims who had heard the Congress was holding a political meeting. in defiance of a British ban, to discuss recent unrest in the city.

Brigadier-General R E Dyer Duly led a column of 50 mainly Indian troops and blocked the only entrance to the ground. Without warning, the soldiers were ordered to open fire.

The firing only stopped when his men ran out of ammunition.



Professor Muhammad Yunus, Managing Director of Grameen Bank was received by the President K R Narayanan of India at the Rashtrapati Bhaban on Thursday. Professor Yunus briefed him on Grameen Bank activities and the progress of microcredit movement following the summit in Washington DC. President Narayanan showed keen interest in the subject.

BREFLY

2 testify against Kim's son: Two key witnesses testified in court Monday that millions of dollars they gave to a son of President Kim Young-sam in the early

1990s were bribes, AP reports from Seoul. The testimony by Kim Duk-young and Lee Sung-ho, both businessmen, was in support of prosecution charges that Kim Hyun-chul, 37, took bribes in exchange for influence. Hyunchul, second son of the president, was arrested in May on charges of collecting 2.3 million dlrs in bribes from two businessmen and evading 1.5 million dlrs in taxes.

Clash leaves 12 hurt in India: At least 12 people, including a 5-year-old boy, were injured in police firing and clashes between rival groups of Hindu devotees over the control of a small temple, police said on Monday, AP

reports from Hyderabad. Trouble started when new trustees of a temple in Hyderabad. the capital of Andhra Pradesh state, on Sunday refused to allow the previous officials to enter. The two groups clashed outside the temple and even attacked policemen who were called in to break up the fight. Police had to fire bullets at the combatants armed with stones and sticks

Snowstorm claims 6 in Peru: Six people froze to death Sunday inside vehicles trapped on roads covered in as much as two metres (6.6 feet) of snow civil defence officials told AFP, reports from Abancay.

At least 800 people in some 50 vehicles were still trapped on roads that have been battered by a violent snowstorm for four days, and were asking officials to send helicopters to rescue them. Officials said that buses, cars and trucks have been trapped since dawn Thursday by heavy snows on a stretch of the Fuquio-Abancay highway, some 840 kilometres (525 miles) from Lima.

6 opposition leaders held in Mali: The six main leaders of Mali's radical opposition were arrested in Bamako Sunday following the lynching of a police officer,

reliable sources said, AFP reports from Bamako. The police officer died in hospital overnight Saturday after being attacked by militant members of the opposition during a rally. Umbrella opposition leader Alamamy Sylla and former Interior Minister Mohamed Lamine Traore, who heads the Movement for Independence, renewal and African integration, were arrested following the incident.

Kidnapped Italian freed in Yemen: Yemeni tribesmen on Sunday released a kidnapped Italian tourist after a standoff with 400 police officers who surrounded the kidnappers' desert stronghold in remote eastern Yemen

with tanks, officials said, AP reports from San'a. Members of the Dhabian tribe released Giorgio Bonanomi, a 49-year-old graphic artist, without receiving ransom, according to Interior Ministry officials speaking on customary condition of anonymity.



Bosnian Serb President Biljana Playsic acknowledges the applauds of local residents in Gradiska during a gathering of some thousand people in Bosnia late on Sunday. The people arrived to show their support to the president. - AFP/UNB photo

Accidents claim 30 IAF pilots since '94

NEW DELHI, Aug 11: Thirty Indian Air Force pilots have died in accidents since 1994, a minister told parliament today. reports AFP.

NVN Somu, junior minister of defence, blamed the accidents on human error, technical defects and bird hits.

Somu said: "In order to contain air accidents on an immediate basis, air support and attack patterns have been re-"Steps have also been taken

for modernisation of areas around airfields. He added that the loss suffered by the Indian Air Force

was about 178 million dollars. The force has lost 94 aircraft during routine flying missions in the last four years during

Foreign Ministry spokesman and Palestinian security forces. said today. Fresh fighting erupts

few days.

in Tajik capital

DUSHANBE. Tajikistan. Aug 11: After a weekend of fighting in the capital Dushanbe, more clashes were reported Monday in an outlying town in this restive Central Asian nation, reports AP.

In the capital, most stores reopened, public transport was running as usual and people filled the streets that were deserted, during weekend shootouts between rival factions in the government.

Large numbers of police patrolled city parks and stood guard near the main government buildings, the Interfax and the ITAR-Tass news agencies reported. Police also set up day in northern Dushanbe, 10 roadblocks across Dushanbe to kilometres (6 miles) from the carry out identity checks on city centre.

cars and pedestrians.

Various accounts have put the death toll at anywhere from four to several dozen as a result of the weekend clashes. The fighting has raised renewed questions about government control in Tajikistan, where Emomali President Rakhmonov signed a peace deal with opposition forces in June. ending five years of civil war.

Unlike the civil war, which was a battle between government forces and various rebel bands, the latest shootouts have involved rival groups within Rakhmonov's government.

The fighting started Saturdirector of Pakistan's UN-

Tension is a way of life in Indo-Pak border

GAYANI BASE CAMP. Disputed Territories, Aug 11: At this barren army camp nestled among forbidding, snowcapped peaks sits a large boulder painted with the motto: "Death

Before Dishonour," reports AP. Nearby. Pakistan's special mountaineering forces rappel down a 90-degree rock precipice, shouting "Allah-Hu-Akhbar" - God is Great.

They are training for service on the rugged Stachin Glacier, a frozen 45 mile-long strip of land on the restive India-Pakistan line.

At the numbing altitude of 13,000 feet, winter temperatures can drop to 122 degrees below zero. More casualties are caused by severe weather than by battles.

Pakistan and India regularly skirmish over one of the world's most tense borders. The frequent gun fights at Siachin and border points farther south claim scores of lives on both

The two hostile neighbours have fought three wars since each gained independence from Britain 50 years ago this month. The sturdy soldiers of Siachin welcome peace talks

that began in March, but see no quick warming of relations. "Despite the talks, the situation on the ground hasn't changed. There are still firefights every day," Capt Taggi

Raja said. Some say the stand a Siachin is costly and pointless in a country that spends almost 30 per cent of its budget on defence while a quarter of its 140 million people live in extreme

poverty. "More people are dying from frostbite than fighting up there," said Dr Mahbub-ul Haq.

funded Human Development Centre.

"I think it's sheer madness for both countries when the total expense is estimated to be nearly 400 million dollars a year," he said.

The barren stretch of land is uninhabitable and offers no known material resources. Haq suggests Pakistan and India agree to move troops off the icy peak, "Until they can agree on whose peak it is, and divert the money for girls' education."

Indian sent troops to occupy Siachin in the early 1980s to protest an agreement Pakistan signed with China delineating the border north of the glacier. Pakistan responded by sending in its own soldiers.

Off the Record

Di finally finds her match!

LONDON: And now he's off to buy an engagement ring? Fuzzy pictures published Sunday of Princess Diana embracing the man touted as her new boyfriend unleashed open season on her private life by British newspapers and speculation about her future, reports AP.

"Princess Diana has finally found a man who makes her feel like a REAL woman," said the Sunday Mirror, which reportedly paid 250,000 pounds (400,000 dollars) for the photos.

Without attribution it told millions of readers that Diana's "repressed sexuality was being healed by the love affair with film producer and playboy Dodi Fayed who had flown to the United States to buy her an en-

gagement ring. Once he pops it on her finger, the paper speculated, Diana will leave Britain and move

to the United States. The photos, taken in the

south of France in the past 10 days by Italian paparazzo Mario to make out the two figures.

Brenna, were so grainy, however, that it was only just possible

Three showed a blonde woman — allegedly Diana — in an embrace with a man with short black hair and wearing sunglasses. In one, she appears to be kissing him.

TPLF explodes 2 bombs in Madras

MADRAS, India, Aug 11: An extremist group today exploded two bombs in this southern Indian city to protest against an atomic plant being built with Russian collaboration, police said, reports AFP.

Police said one person was

injured in the pre-dawn blast at a cultural centre run by the Russian Consulate while a second bomb went off at a local election office. A little-known extremist group, the Tamil People's Liber-

ation Front, claimed responsibility in some pamphlets saying the blasts were in protest against an atomic energy plant being built near the town of Tirunelveli. The group did not specify

why they were opposed to the plant. Environmentalists have attacked the plant as environ-

mentally unsafe. A guard at the Russian Consulate here was injured in the blast, police said, adding a portion of the building had been damaged.

Fresh fighting may erupt in Congo

BRAZZAVILLE, Aug 11: Gunfire could be heard in the capital of Republic of Congo Sunday, and the government issued a statement accusing the rebels of 'provocation,' reports AP.

Across the river in neighbouring Congo, meanwhile, boats were arriving with people fleeing the renewed fighting. The gunfire was so intense that it could be heard in Kinshasa,

capital of Congo. The developments came two days after the UN Security Council said no UN peacekeeping force will be sent to the Republic of Congo until the warring parties agreed on a "political process," a lasting cease-fire and guarantees for security of

the main airport. The army of President Pascal Lissouba and the militia of his rival, former dictator Denis Sassou-Nguesso, began fighting June 5, causing an exodus of hundreds of thousands of civilians from Brazzaville and extensive damage to the city centre. Hundreds of civilians were

killed in the violence. The fighting had stopped for the most part in the last two weeks but gunfire has been heard for the last two days.

Anastasia, 11 months, tries to reach a cross during the memorial service of her father Tassos Isaac in the Cypriot village of Paralimni Sunday. Maria was born one month after Isaac was beaten to death at nearby Dherynia by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot demonstrators. The ceremony came one day ahead of the opening of a second round of UN-sponsored peace talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders aimed at ending the 23 years long division. Anastasia's dejected mother is carrying her. - AFP/UNB photo

Cambodian King offers to abdicate

Hun Sen seeks Sihanouk's blessing for new govt

BEIJING, Aug 11: Cambodian strongman Hung Sen and his new Co-Premier Ung Huot arrived here today to seek King Norodom Sihanouk's symbolic blessing for the new political order in Phnom Penh, reports

Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk indicated today he would soon return home as monarch, just hours after he offered to abdicate his throne if asked to by the country's strongman leader.

In a letter received Phnom Penh, the ailing monarch, who has been receiving medical treatment in Beijing for the past six months, said he and Queen Norodom Moneath would return home to attend a Buddhist prayer for peace.

The letter, dated today, appeared to conflict with a written statement received in Beijing earlier in the day saying he had prepared a letter of abdication and would give up the throne if tough Second Premier Hun Sen asked him to at a crucial audience at the King's Beijing home Tuesday.

The monarch, who observers say is a "master" at sending conflicting signals, did not give any date for his return, but the tone of the letter suggested it would be soon.

officer.

"My wife and I will go on a trip by plane to Siem Reap province of our beloved country Cambodia in order to attend a religious Sabbath Day and to join Buddhist religious ceremonies and offer blessings to our nation to restore peace and national reconciliation again," the King said. AP adds: Cambodian King

Norodom Sihanouk offered Monday to abdicate, and said he regarded his son's ouster as prime minister in a bloody coup last month as illegal. Sihanouk's offer came as

coup leader Hun Sen flew to Beijing to explain to the king how he plans to govern Cambodia. Sihanouk is in the Chinese capital receiving medical treatment.

In a statement released before Hun Sen's arrival, Sihanouk said he prepared a letter of abdication more than a week ago and that he was ready to relinquish his throne "When it is possible for me to do so." But the 74-year-old monarch

said he first wanted assurances from Hun Sen, whom he called a "strongman," "That I can abdicate without risk of criticism from him or accusations of having added greater difficulties to the country and people" of Cambodia.

Sihanouk has talked previously about abdicating and has said he does not expect Cambodia's monarchy to last much Hun Sen, who led the July 5

putsch against Co-Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh, Sihanouk's son, said he wanted to explain his actions to the king and his "Government's plans for working, especially its plans in relation to the elec-

Information Minister leng Mouly said the visit was significant because Sihanouk is "A symbol of Cambodia sovereignty" and it is important to show him that things have "returned to normal."

The king said he would meet Hun Sen and Ung Huot, Hun Sen's hand-picked successor to Ranariddh, on Tuesday in his residence. He also will meet Chea Sim, who Sihanouk has

designated acting head of state. Sihanouk, who has described Ung Huot as a "puppet," said he still regards Ranariddh as prime minister and decried his removal as "illegal and un-

constitutional." "I have never changed this position, which is and will remain my own," he said in a statement handwritten on Sun-

All schools in

Myanmar to

open today

Lankan military desperately seeking fighters for war against Tigers

RATMALANA, Sri Lanka, Aug 11: Inside a fortified camp ringed by moats, barbed wire and bamboo thickets, new recruit Rajita de Silva plunges her bayonet into a dummy, reports AP. "The time has come for us to join the war and save our country," she says later at her training

Da Silva, the 21-year-old daughter of a goldsmith, is a bit of a rare commodity in Sri Lanka. Military officials say young people with such a patriotic attitude and solid middle class background are becoming more and more reluctant to fight in the country's civil war, now

in its 14th year. Young Sri Lankans once saw a military career as a sure way to a good salary and social status. That was before ethnic Tamil separatists took up arms against the government, controlled by the Sinhalese ethnic majority.

the dangers of a bloody war, and the military finds itself competing for recruits against 200 or so foreign companies here to attract the best and brightest. Even those it does sign up might not stick around for long: The military says more than

12,000 soldiers have deserted the army in recent

Now career-minded young people are avoiding

months. Last month, it offered an amnesty for deserters - 4,400 people reported in.

Sri Lanka, an Indian Ocean nation with 18 million people, has 114,000 people in military service. The government estimates the Tamil Tiger rebels have 5,000 fighters, but exact numbers are unknown.

Brigadier Sarath Munasinghe, the military's top spokesman said it has been particularly hard to find air force pilots, and motivated, intelligent candidates to serve as officers on the battlefield. He did not give recruiting figures.

The situation is so serious that the military has had to dip into the nation's pool of 35,000 police officers to support troops at the war front. Though the government refuses to give consolidated casualty figures, records compiled by The Associated Press from military press statements suggest 500 government soldiers died in battle in the past three months. Eighty-six more died in the first week of August alone.

Every week, top Sri Lankan newspapers carry full-page colour advertisements appealing for military volunteers. Radio and television announcements blare the same message, and the government asks village elders to try to persuade

young people in rural Sri Lanka to fight. "The choice is yours," says one add showing a young man in jeans and old sports shoes next to

one in a smart uniform. The otherwise secretive Sri Lankan military recently invited journalists to one of its premier training centers to show off the kind of recruits it

wants. Manel Chandrakanthi, the 22-year-old daughter of an artist who helps restore Buddhist monastaries, said her elder brother is in the merchant navy, and one of his fellow sailors

encouraged her to join the military. "I could have had a normal life, go for higher studies, get married, have children and live happily," she said. "But, I chose to be in the

Chandrakanthi will spend 2 and a half years at the Kotelawala Defence Academy at Ratmalana, on the seashore about 15 miles (25 kms) south of Colombo, the capital. The camp, heavily guarded against rebel attack, is the only institution that trains officers from all three wings of the armed forces.

"I have a dream," said de Silva, the goldsmith's daughter. "One day, when I get married, have children and retire. I could tell them battlefield

stories about how we saved our nation." The armed forces may be targeting young

women as an untapped source of recruits. Military officials say half the fighters in any given Tamil rebel attack force are women. Of the 107 cadets in this year's graduating class at Ratmalana, 17 are women. Currently

2,000 male officers in the Sri Lankan Army. "This is a good sign, that educated women are coming on their own," said Kumar Fernando, the commandant of the academy spread over 45 lush acres (18 hectares).

there are only 50 female officers, compared to

Both da Silva and Chandrakanthi are Sinhalese, the ethnic group that makes up 75 per cent of the population and, according to military analysts, 96 per cent of the army. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and

other Tamil militias are fighting for a separate nation, or at least autonomy, to preserve their language, culture and economic opportunities. Between 45,000 and 50,000 people have died in the war so far.

"We want the war to end, but with victory on our side," said Chandrakanthi, the future army

YANGON, Aug 11: All basic education schools (primary to high schools) in Myanmar will be reopened tomorrow after a

long suspension of classes since December last year, reports Xinhua. Today's official newspaper the New Light of Myanmar quoted Minister for Education

U Pan Aung as saying. Meeting with township education officers and school heads in the capital of Yangon

today, the minister called for teacher-parent cooperation for peaceful pursuit of education, the schools were closed in early December last year following a series of demonstrations by some university students in the capital.